

Remarks

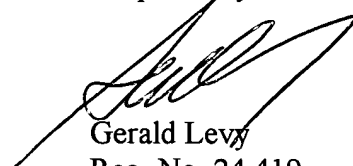
We trust that the examiner will now find this application to be in condition for allowance and reconsideration is respectfully requested. In this regard, the Examiner will first note that the title has been changed and is respectfully amended as requested. In addition, the claims have been amended to overcome the formal matters raised and to make it clear that the transfer means first transfers the sheet bunch toward the other end thereof and then after the sheet bunch is stapled transfers the sheet bunch toward the one end.

Claims 1-8 stand rejected as being anticipated by Takahara. It is respectfully noted, however, that Takahara neither teaches nor suggests that transfer means transfer the sheet bunch in one direction before stapling and in the opposite direction after stapling. This feature is also not disclosed or suggested in U.S. Patent No. 5,997,239.

The Examiner will note that the claims have been amended to make clear that stapling occurs between the sheet bunch being transferred toward the other (non-matched) end of the sheet bunch and then toward the matched end of the bunch.

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the claims as amended herein are patentably distinguishable over the cited art and the application is now in condition for allowance. A relatively early notification of allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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